THE DAILY

Commercial Advertiser IS PUBLISHED

Every Morning Except Sundays.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

DAILY P. C. ADVERTISER, six months... DAILY P. C. ADVERTISER, three months DAILY P. C. ADVERTISER, per month...

Payable Invariably in Advance.

Christmas at Bethlehem. [Youth's Companion.]

Not the Bethlehem of Judea, but its modern namesake, founded by the Moravians in the beautiful Lehigh valley of Pennsylvania. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Dec. 24, the smallest children assemble in the church for a "Love Feast," which is chiefly a service of song. During its progress buns and mugs of coffee are served to the little folks. Near the close of the meeting lighted wax tapers are given to them, to represent the light which came into the world with the birth of Christ. During this part of the ceremony the congregation sings. The ladies of the choir wear bewitching little caps instead of bonnets, and look very charming as the nacimiento, a little altar erected in they sing to the accompaniment of the organ and the trombones-alternating English and German hymns. The service over, the children disperse

to their homes, where Santa Claus has been busy giving finishing touches to the "Putz," which designation is applied to the whole Christmas decorations. It is not a tree alone which these favored ones have, but there is given in these homes a whole landscape formed of rocks and mosses, making hills and valleys where all the animals out of Noah's ark

There is always a stable which shelters the holy family, and the adoring shepherds may be seen approaching it from distant hills. There is also a fish-pond with real or toy fish sporting in it. Sometimes a fountain plays in the midst of the scene, but the pipes which conduct the water are apt to leak in the most prosaic manner

and stain the housewife's carpets, so this crowning glory is rarely seen.

The Putz remains for weeks, a continued delight to the children, who arrange and alter it to suit their own fancy, till all its beauty and freshness are gone. At 6 o'clock Christmas Eve, the distribution of presents being over, the older children repair to the church, where another service is held similar to that of the afternoon, with the omission of the buns and coffee. At its conclusion the taperbearers wend their way through the village streets with picturesque effect.

Christmas and the Saturnalia.

[Youth's Companion.] A custom of the Roman Saturnalia, which came unchanged to our time, is familiar to us all. We mean the three days holiday given to the slaves. The slaves in our southern states, down to the close of the war, enjoyed this privilege.

Throughout the Roman empire slaves

went about bareheaded, except on the three great days of the Saturnalia, when all were permitted to wear the cap of familiar shape, which still figures as the liberty cap, upon the tops of liberty poles. On those days the slaves are supposed to have been allowed to say anything they chose to their masters. Probably, however, they used this liberty with discre-

The first Christian congregations in Italy were largely composed of slaves and of the common people, though among them were found educated and highly gifted persons. The early Christian teachers had the greatest difficulty to keep their converts from joining in the pagan festivals, to which they had been accustomed, and which were even needful to ameliorate their hard lot and monotonous

When the Saturnalia came round, the Christian slave or freedman found himself struggling between the habits of his old life and the claims of his new faith. If he withstood the old, he missed the only holiday which would be his durtwelve months of labor. If he yielded, his religious life might be injured by contact with idolatrous rites. It is not strange, therefore, that Christian pastors, seeing the strife of habit with conscience should seek for the golden mean between license and prohibition. They acted upon the principle that though there must be unity in essentials, there should be liberty in non-essentials, and love in all things. They took what was good in the Roman holidays and associated it with the birthday festival of Him who came to bring peace on earth and good-will to men.

The Puritan's Denunciation.

[Charles Dudley Warner.] In the Puritan view these festivities of Christm's Day. It is a good custom—may it flourish! And may the time be long distant when there shall no longer be one Christmas had become wholly pagan, or, what was worse, popish, and it was in the tide of such fervid fanaticism as that of Prynne and Stubbes that the innocent | the girl he likes, sans peur et sans regayeties as well as the excesses of the time | proche!" were swept away, and swept away so completely that it was centuries before many descendants of the Puritans could look upon any celebration of Christmas as otherwise than sinful.

"Into what a stupendous height of more than pagan implety," exclaims Prynne, whose rhetoric is his only amusing point, "have we not now degenerated!" "We can not sanctify a Lord's day, observe a 5th of November, or any other day of publicke thanksgiving to our gracious God, or yet celebrate an Easter, a Pentegest, or such like selemn feasts (much less cost, or such like solemn feasts (much less a Christmas, as we phrase it) in plausible pious sort (as too many paganizing Christians now conceit) without drinking, roaring, healthing, dicing, carding, dancing, masques, and stage-plays." "How doe we Christians spend or celebrate for the most part the Nativity of our Saviour but with such heathenish sports as these, which Turkes and Infidels would abhor

CHRISTMAS IN MEXICO.

The holiday season in Mexico shows

Dramatic Religious Rites Mingled with Stately Merry-Making. [F. A. B, in Philadelphia Press.]

as strong a contrast with the celebration in our country as Providence presents it in climate and people. It has religious traits that are attractive, and many of them dramatic. In fact, every phase of life in that Catholic country is singularly tinged with the forms of religion. During Christmas-tide they are shown in their best lights. Like all communities that worship their patron saints, their holidays begin earlier and last much longer than ours. The celebration of the birth of Christ begins there with the pilgrimage of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where the Child was born. For nine days before the natal day everything is given up to the first act of this crude Passion play. The lower classes spend most of their time in worship at home and in the churches. But those who are wealthier take upon themselves the duty of celebrating every stage of the pilgrimage of nearly 1,900 years ago. Those moving in the same circle of society gather in groups each evening and INSURANCE COMPANY go as a surprise party to the house of one of their circles. They sing and rap vig-orously at the door, when those within

"Who seeks admittance?" "The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph ask

lodgings in your house. The doors are thrown open, and the FIRE visitors are welcomed and conducted to the private residences of the better classes, representing the birth of Christ. Here each one repeats a prayer with the rosary. Losses paid since Company was organ-These simple religious services over, all are invited to the parlor, where refreshments are served and the host makes proclamation that he is honored by the pre-sence of Mary and Joseph, and invites them all to make merry. Music and dancing succeed eating and drinking, and there is prolonged merry making.

Christmas Eve ushers in a new scene, the most dramatic and beautiful of all the noliday season. The richer people who have represented the long pilgrimage, give way to the poorer classes, who now take up the celebration by giving the "Pastorela," a dramatic representation of the birth of Christ. The largest room that can be procured in the village is fitted up for the representation, and the humble people, who have few wants and little to supply them with, come in to represent the characters in the drama.

The shepherds in the field observing the Star of Bethlehem, are cleverly represented, as is their journey under its guid-ance. The birth in the manger, the historic cow, the angels and St. Michael are all shown in the simple, picturesque, but impressive play. The spectators who witness and applaud the humble players, who are thus properly representing those who welcomed the birth of our Savior, are CAPITAL, : \$10,000,000 sometimes those who made the emblematic visits of the previous nine days, but, generally the play is for the poorer classes. This charming introduction to Christmas Day ends a little before midnight, when those who have witnessed it are expected to entertain the performers. Then all classes go to midnight mass, where the greatest crowd of all the year, except Holy Week, are seen. The food furnished after these representations consists usually of bunuclos, a wheat-flour cake cooked much INSURANCE COMPANY. like our doughnuts, and tesquino, a kind of beer or fermented drink, of which the poorer classes partake freely during holi-

Christmas Day is celebrated in a quiet way. Nothing of the boisterous joviality of the American day is apparent. Gifts from friend to friend are rarely inter-changed. The servants often get their aguinaldo, a Christmas present, but even this custom is not general. Hearty and happy as is the Mexican's Christmas, it is enjoyed more as a religious festival than as a feast.

"O, The Mistletoe Bough!" [Boston Globe.]

"Ivy," says a learned professor "was sacred to Bacchus, and was used at the Dionysian love feast. Another name for Bacchus was Kissos, which also is the ivy, but whether our custom of kissing under the mistletoe is a relic of Kissos and the Agapæ-doesn't matter in the

"Bird-lime, it is significant to observe, is made from the berries of the mistletoe, whence the same words signifies in Greek both mistletoe and bird-lime. How many a luckless human bird has been 'limed' under the mistletoe at Christmas. Some authorities refer the kissing custom to a theory that the mistletoe was the forbidden tree in Eden. The plant was also used in religious ceremonies by the Persian Magi.
"The stately ancestral homes in England are now being richly decorated with holly, and ivy and amber-berried mistle toe, and the hearts of the female inmates from the fresh-faced house-maid to the languid Lady Jane, are beating faster as they hang the parasite in the most convenient nooks and corners in which they will take good care to be caught on

A Heavy Affair.

day in the year on which a man may kiss

[Joaquin Filler.] A London Christmas is a heavy affair. In fact, it is mostly tradespeople you see there on the streets at such times. The butcher, for example, wears a bouquet in his blue blouse. And this coarse, greasy subject has flowers-most by artificial paper flowers-stuck all up and down the dead carcasses-horrible!-which hang in rows and dozens about his shop doors. Other decorations, in similar bad taste meet you all the time and at every turn. And everybody's nose is red.

Adoration of the Nativity. Mr. Howison, in his "Sketches of Upper Canada, " mentions meeting an Indian at midnight, creeping along in the stillness of a beautiful Christmas Eve. The Indian made signals to him to be silent; and, when questioned as to his reason, replied, "Me watch to see the deer kneel; Truth: The want of money is the root fall upon their knees to the Great Spirit A LIC. Office with the Attorney General, Alii this is Christmas Night, and all the deer

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